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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 004960

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/12/2015

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PNAT](#) [PHUM](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: VIOLENT ACTS OF INTIMIDATION MARR THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN

Classified By: CLASSIFIED BY POLITICAL COUNSELOR ROBERT S. FORD,  
FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

11. (C) Summary. During early December we heard reports of blackmail, kidnapping and murder of political candidates and campaign workers in the run-up to the national elections. Numerous incidents have been reported to the Senior Representative of the United Nations Secretary General (SRSG) and Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI) and have reportedly received no response. Political contacts seek USG assistance and to apply pressure to the IECI to act. With our encouragement, IECI Commissioner Safwat Sidqi held a press conference December 8 in which he condemned campaign violence. The Ambassador issued a statement condemning violence against those working on election campaigns on December 10. We are urging political parties to make similar statements and act upon them. These incidents of violence, while reprehensible, are not preventing a serious political campaign or robbing Iraqis of real choices at the ballot box. End Summary.

12. (C) In a December 2 letter addressed to Senior SRSG Ashraf Qazi, Operations Deputy for Allawi's Iraqi Patriotic List Azzam al-Wash identified 6 counts of violent campaign intimidation against coalition members:

-- Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) members Abdel al-Azziz Jasim Hassan and Yass Khidhir Hayder al-Lammi killed in Sadr City on November 22 following a campaign rally.

-- ICP supporter Rassoul Salman al-Shummari killed while hanging campaign posters in Ammeria on November 22.

-- Number 2 candidate in Maysan Ahmad Sha'alan Mustashar Albo Darraji and his assistant Hayder Khaydoon killed on November 30 following a campaign rally. Darraji's son was also shot and is in critical condition.

-- Iraqi National Accord (INA) member Muhamad Lazim killed by an IED in Baghdad on November 27.

-- INA member Rasheed Atia Muhamad kidnapped while hanging campaign posters in the Rusafa District of Baghdad on November 27.

-- Four campaign workers were severely beaten while hanging posters in the Yarmook District of Baghdad on December 1.

13. (C) Dr. al-Wash told PolOffs on December 7 that he sent another letter to SRSG Qazi citing 10 additional incidents. He added that everyone needs to respect the sanctity of the election process and hopes the United Nations will bring pressure to bear on the IECI to act.

14. (C) National Democratic Alliance (List 78) leader Faisal al-Sahlani told PolOff on December 5 that he continues to fear for his daughter's safety. Al-Sahlani recounted that one of his security detail had been compromised by men he asserted came from the Ministry of Interior (MOI). One of his most-trusted guards was taken, beaten and shot twice in the shoulder and threatened with the murder of his wife and children unless the guard promised to cooperate with them after the elections. The bodyguard alleged that they demanded he start guarding Sahlani's daughter, woman activist Abeer al-Sahlani. Sahlani said he has noticed MOI car (MOI license plates) following his movements and believes that they plan to kidnap his daughter in order to blackmail him. Sahlani said he believes that Badr Corps is behind the kidnapping plot. Sahlani wants this situation investigated but not by MOI.

15. (C) On December 6, Liberal Republicans Party (List 517) leader Hussein Mussawi (the LRP itself is part of the Sun of Iraq Coalition, List 652) recounted to PolOffs the November 17 kidnapping of the Sun of

Iraq's Coalition leader Tewfik al-Yasiri. According to Mussawi, the mid-afternoon kidnapping started when 6 armored cars (BMWs and Landcruisers) parked in front of al-Yasiri's home. According to Mussawi, a Second Commando Brigade (Wolf Brigade) Lieutenant Colonel and his team forcibly entered the home, seized the guards' weapons and took al-Yasiri. They handcuffed him, tied his legs together and threw him in the back of the Landcruisers. The officer demanded USD 500,000. In the end, Al-Yasiri's wife paid a USD 220,000 ransom, Mussawi stated. The Wolf Brigade returned al-Yasiri on November 19. Mussawi said that the Wolf Brigade is full of Islamists and he believes either Badr or Sadr-related militia planned the kidnapping. Mussawi urged American intervention as well as support to smaller centrist liberal political parties that lack financial resources to make an impact in the elections.

16. (C) In a December 7 press conference, UN Secretary-General's Special Representative Ashraf Qazi

SIPDIS highlighted his concerns on campaign violence and called on political leaders to discourage such tactics. During a December 8 IECI press conference, Commissioner Safwat Sidqi called for an end to campaign violence. He noted that the IECI had been receiving many complaints, some relating to violence.

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COMMENT  
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17. (C) In response to these incidents, as well as the attack on the Kurdish Islamist Union (ref), the Ambassador on December 10 issued a statement denouncing acts of campaign violence around the country as well as efforts to bribe voters. He urged Iraqi political parties to join with him in condemning such acts of violence. Political parties, meanwhile, also want the Iraqi electoral commission to take a stronger public stand on campaign violations. Poloffs have been urging IECI Commissioners to speak publicly about these incidents and invoke sanctions against political parties determined guilty of abusing election regulations against violence and intimidation. These incidents of violence, while reprehensible, are not preventing a serious political campaign or robbing Iraqis of real choices at the ballot box.  
KHALILZAD